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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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TO: The Acting Secretary
FROM: ARA - William G. Bowdler

Your Meeting with Members of the New York City
Bar Association on U.S. Policy Toward Argentina
July 9, 1980, at 10:30 A.M.

I. INTRODUCTION

You have agreed to meet with members of the New York City Bar Association's Committee on International Human Rights to discuss their concern over U.S. human rights policy toward Argentina.

II. BACKGROUND

In their letter of June 5, 1980 to Secretary Muskie, the Committee expressed concern about recent reports indicating that the Administration was contemplating a shift in policy toward Argentina because of alleged preoccupation over Argentina's new "Soviet connection". They felt that, in view of the still-serious human rights situation there, any change in U.S. focus on Argentina would undermine efforts, internationally and within Argentina, to improve the human rights situation. The Committee asked that it be permitted to meet with the Secretary or with you to discuss these issues.

In your letter of June 18 to Committee Chairman Marvin E. Frankel, you assured him that no change in human rights policy toward Argentina is contemplated and offered to discuss this subject with members of the Committee.

Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, we have sought to improve our relationship with Argentina to blunt growing Soviet political and economic influence there and to move Argentina closer to the West on specific issues such as grains. This is in addition to our objectives to obtain further human rights improvements and to achieve progress toward our nonproliferation goals. We seek a balance in the pursuit of these objectives without slighting any one of them. Your June memorandum to the President outlined a plan of

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action for 1980 to improve U.S.-Argentine military, economic and nuclear relations. On human rights, the plan calls for the intensification of consultations to seek specific human rights progress through the elimination of disappearances, guarantees against the torture of detainees, the restoration of judicial guarantees for persons suspected of terrorism, a significant reduction of the number of political prisoners, and to urge an accounting for the disappeared.

Points To Be Made

-- I again want to assure you that no change in U.S. human rights policy toward Argentina is contemplated and that we will continue to encourage improvements in the human rights situation in Argentina.

-- We also have other important interests in Argentina in addition to human rights; we have sought through dialogue with the Argentine Government to obtain support for other U.S. objectives such as nuclear safeguards, grains restrictions on the Soviet Union, and the Olympics boycott.

-- We believe it is in the U.S. interest to seek cooperation in these areas, without compromising on our human rights concerns.

-- As you noted in your letter, we also believe U.S. human rights policy toward Argentina over the past four years has brought improvements. At the same time, we recognize that serious problems remain, and normal relations with Argentina will not be achieved while the human rights situation there remains a problem.

-- An integral part of our consultations with the Argentine Government is our concern over human rights; we intend to continue and intensify our dialogue with the Argentine Government to seek an end to disappearances and torture, the restoration of judicial guarantees, a reduction in the number of political prisoners, and to continue to urge an accounting for the disappeared. We also strongly support the efforts of international organizations (OAS, UN) to deal with these problems.

-- (If asked) We do not at this time plan to renew our military supply relationship with Argentina nor to seek rescission of the Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment.

Drafted:ARA/SC:GJWhitman/gjw

Cleared:HA:RGraham

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